

JK

1903

P7



**Women**

**Should**

**Vote**



Class JK1903

Book .P7

Copyright N<sup>o</sup>

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**





If  
Women  
Should  
Vote—

BY  
PEGGY PRYDE.



Trade supplied by the AMERICAN NEWS  
COMPANY and all its branches.

JK 1903  
P7

Copyrighted 1910 by  
PEGGY PRYDE.

---

Volksfreund Press, Buffalo

© Cl. A 262921

# If Women Should Vote—

**W**HAT will suffrage do for women collectively and individually?

Are they in every way competent to exercise the privilege of franchise?

Can they vote and hold office without sacrificing the duties and responsibilities of home life, wifehood and motherhood?

Will casting a vote broaden and strengthen them mentally, morally and physically?

Will it make them better women, better wives and better mothers?

Would they want the ballot if they could not hold office?

Could they purify politics, and, if they could, would they?

Do women need the ballot?

In securing their so-called rights, would they not be deprived of many real privileges?

Would not universal suffrage decrease the pay of women workers and eventually crowd them out of positions now open to them?

Would not the fact of their having the right to vote subject them, to a greater extent, to the varied phases of man's so-called tyranny?

If the ignorant masculine vote is so detrimental to the best interests of the country, will existing conditions be improved by the addition of an enormously ignorant feminine vote?

How will the ballot benefit women who are obliged to be self-supporting?

There are about nine hundred and ninety-nine more questions bearing on the subject of "votes for women," but these are sufficient to start an argument with.

\* \* \*

I have carefully waded through the published utterances of those women who are demanding the ballot and have sat patiently through several conventions and meetings held by them, giving close attention and much valuable time to all that was said in order to learn, if possible, just what suffragists want and why they want it.

Being an anti-suffragist, with very decided opinions and a keen admiration for the best type of masculinity known to American women, I have been constantly humiliated and disgusted by the illogical arguments, hysterical outcries against man's "tyranny," unwomanly accusations and invectives, senseless, baseless demands for equality in all things, and a ceaseless, bitter misrepresentation of facts advanced by the suffragists, who seem to take a cheap delight in uttering deliberate falsehoods with but a single purpose—that of causing warfare between the sexes.

Do suffragists want a reversal of sex? Do they want to make "squaw men" out of our manly men? Do those who are clamoring for what they consider their "rights" want to redress certain easily remedied "wrongs," or do they want to usurp and control all the duties, respon-



sibilities and rights of the strong, wiser, more liberal sex?

The dominant note in a vast amount of discord, mud-slinging and noise is an insistent demand for power and the right to exercise it as each would-be voter sees fit. They show no desire whatever to co-operate with man, nor any intention of recognizing his inalienable right in all matters of public or personal interest.

Indeed, the primary object seems to be a deep-seated desire to sweep mere man from the face of the earth and make this world an Adamless Eden.

Ambitious, is it not, for a certain set of women, temperamentally incapable of self-control, to claim superiority in matters calling for the very traits of mind and character in which they themselves are so lamentably deficient?

Suffragists claim there are a million women in the United States who demand the ballot.

Possibly.

In the year 1900 the women of this country—which also includes Alaska and Hawaii—numbered 37,244,145. Granting that about 30,000,000 are too young, too old, too ignorant or too indifferent to express any choice, and permitting suffragists to retain their 1,000,000 ballot-seekers, the antis may safely lay claim to a little over 4,000,000 sane and safe women who have no desire to “hurl aside the chains of slavery and beard the tyrant on his native soil.”

At present the battle of pro and con is being waged solely between women—those who are for the ballot, and those who are against it. The former are con-

stantly in evidence, publicity being their strong card. The latter are quietly but steadily exerting the influence that never fails to claim attention and respect from men either bad or good—the dignity of true womanhood.

On one side stands an army of tried and true wives and mothers, each of whom knows her privileges are far greater than her so-called rights; knows that the influence she wields at home is far greater than any she can exercise at the polls; knows she will have all just and judicious demands granted at the asking; knows thoroughly how fully her helpful qualities are recognized and appreciated by all right-thinking men.

On the other hand, the component parts of the suffrage faction are a few female men; rich women with more leisure and money than brains; widows who were unhappy wives; bachelor maids and old maids who have no knowledge of the value of sex interests; divorced women; women who are poor wives and worse mothers; and a coterie of really earnest, dignified women, who, dissatisfied and unhappy in themselves, wrongly blame their environment.

And the attitude of each army expresses its status.

The antis are working so daintily and quietly as to give the impression that they are making no preparations to give battle.

The numerous factions of the suffragists are torn by internal dissensions, breaking off from the main body to reorganize independently, having numerous undignified personal encounters, and

threatening to dissolve by the well-known process inaugurated by the Kilkenny cats—that of eating each other up.

Let me say in all seriousness, that no contented, happy, level-minded woman, no woman who realizes the great honor bestowed upon her by manly men, is to be found in the ranks of those discontented home-wreckers and man-defamers who are so turbulently clamoring for the right to be unsexed.

The woman, married or single, who knows herself, her capabilities, her limitations, fully realizes how necessary to her in many ways are the chivalrous consideration and protection of man.

The most independent woman is she who realizes that her strongest hold upon man is not because of her independence of him, but because of her real or fancied dependence upon him.

Dependence does not mean slavery, but rather a reliance upon and confidence in a greater strength than her own, a stronger nature and a better, broader judgment than, as a rule, she can exercise.

The chief aim of the "votes for women" adherents seems to be that of causing trouble and dissensions between the sexes as well as between classes.

"Give us everything!" they say to men; "give us power, control, your manliness, your individuality! We do not need you! We can walk alone and serve where you have served since the beginning of time!"

And what an inglorious muddle they would make of matters and things! How quickly would they be compelled to ask aid from mere man, whom they so thor-

oughly despise until they find they can't get along without him!

To proclaim, as suffragists do, that the women of this country not only have no rights, but also that the law in all its phases metes out only injustice to them, is a libel upon the laws of the land as well as upon the men who make them.

Indeed, we who do not feel we need the ballot, think the shrieking sisterhood of would-be voters libels its own sex, as well!

For suffragists to assert that "the women of this country demand the right to vote and hold office" is both false and misleading.

The minority can never speak for the majority.

The representative women of this country, the women who are interested in public matters but do not lose sight of nor neglect home interests, are not willing to have their publicity-seeking sisters speak for them, and when the proper time arrives they will voice their sentiments in no uncertain tones. In the meantime we will consider and dissect the claims of those who want the ballot, and their illogical, misleading arguments.

They are very amusing.

In every public speech I note frequent reference to the falsity of the supposition that man is superior to woman. Why is that made so prominent? Does it not lead one to think suffragists would not so incessantly vaunt their superiority if they did not feel, deep down in their hearts, that they really are inferior, but are ashamed to acknowledge it?

Here is a resume of choice bits culled at random from much talking:

"Votes for women mean social reform . . . the woman who thinks for herself, depends on her own judgment, uses her own intelligence in deciding what is best for her home and her children instead of accepting blindly the dictates of the man who stands at the head of that home, is bound to work out her own salvation in the larger issues. . . . When women have the ballot they must be taught how to use it. . . . The contempt in which men hold women. . . . It will resolve the question of sex against sex. . . . Women are tired of peaceful methods in their fight for suffrage, and sterner measures will be employed unless suffrage is forthcoming before a great while. . . . Women today are used by the political parties in a most pernicious way. . . . If we make no demand for what is our birthright, we are unworthy citizens of the commonwealth to which we belong, and are content to rank as chattels and dependents . . . and there is no one to help us if we do not help ourselves."

And so on, ad nauseum.

Most truly has it been said that as a rule women are devoid of the sense of humor!

And anything more illogical, contradictory and ambiguous than the platform adopted at the first "Political Convention of Disfranchised Women"—doesn't that sound fine?—it has never been permitted me to listen to.

Yet the feminine audience went wild over it and ruined many pairs of gloves in applauding it.

(It reminded me of the three little tailors of Threadneedle Street, who began a petition with, "We, the people of Great Britain.")

That platform was framed by two women, one of whom is a lawyer. I wonder if either of them realized the huge joke that was concealed in the plank that proclaimed "Self-government in the home and the State is the inalienable right of every normal adult"?

Dear sisters, how many of us, with our varied and complex temperamentality, are really "normal"—"normal" enough to be capable of self-restraint and self-government; "normal" enough to meet with balance and poise the simple trials and perplexities of daily life; "normal" enough to put aside hysterics, fainting fits, petty spite and jealousies; "normal" enough to conquer or check the little failings that sting like gnats and disclose the pettiness of our natures?

The truly normal woman is a masterpiece; but you won't find more than one in five hundred, and none at all, I dare assert, in the class that is shrieking, "Votes for women" and "Down with the tyrant man!"

Just fancy calling a suffragist "normal"!

Every well-organized, well-balanced woman does rule the home, in conjunction with her husband, and she certainly has no desire to deprive him of his rightful share in home government. Never before in the history of the world has

woman shared so equally with man the responsibilities, duties and rewards of life; never before has she been so generously recognized and welcomed as man's helpful aid and co-worker.

And this state of affairs was not brought about by woman's wielding the ballot!

Though denying man the right to share in home rule, would the suffragist permit him to pay the bills and eject the cook if she should be impertinent?

Personally, I would translate "self-government" to mean governing ourselves; our unpleasant traits; trying to make ourselves better, wiser, more suitable companions and comrades to our best men, and better wives and mothers. As I interpret the expression, I am quite sure no "normal" man ever did nor ever will interfere with woman's "inalienable right to self-government," and I am equally sure the ballot would never be of the slightest help in that branch of self-education.

The lack of self-control, or self-government, as shown by the speech and actions of those women who are demanding the right to vote is enough to make men weep over feminine irresponsibility—or take to drink!

Again the platform:

"The refusal of this right to women (self-government in home and State) has resulted in social, legal and economic injustice to them, and has also intensified the existing economic disturbances throughout the world."

Or, according to the public utterances of "Disfranchised Women," all the eco-

conomic disturbances throughout the world are the results of woman's not voting. Men won't permit her to vote. Therefore, men are the primary cause of all the existing evils of the world.

Which is a direct contradiction to the Biblical story of the apple, the serpent and the woman.

But listen to this plank in that wonderful platform:

"The ballot is the only legal and permanent means of defending the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

How beautifully, logically, transcendently simple!

Give women the ballot, and we will all be exquisitely, delightfully, excruciatingly equipped to chase life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness all over the place, and capture all three, to have and to hold forevermore.

Beautiful!

But suppose we drop that platform and all its planks. It begins to teeter like a see-saw. Life is too full of real effort to use bubbles for targets. "Disfranchised Women" have time to chase rainbows. The rest of us have to do real things.

It is not, however, very difficult to describe and define the wants of would-be voters.

Women want the ballot in order to secure a uniform divorce law.

Mere man, representing church and State, has been trying for years to do that very thing, but he finds it to be a great problem, and dependent upon time, patience and the co-operation of States.

Women want the ballot so they can hold office.



We will pass that up without comment; call it another bubble target, and let it go at that.

Women want the ballot in order to secure equal pay for women workers.

Dear ladies, if you have gone as deeply into that subject as I have, you surely know, as I do, that women are the cause—and the sole cause—of the meagre pay given women and girls in so many lines of work.

Statistics prove that of the vast number of female wage-earners in the United States one-fifth consists of women and girls who do not need to work for their living.

And there you have the direct cause of self-supporting woman's starvation wages!

Think the situation over.

Because twenty girls are working in office, store and factory for just money enough to pay for theatre tickets, candy and extra finery, eighty girls are doing the same work for the same pay, not for theatre tickets and extra finery, but for food, shelter and necessary clothing.

It is one-fifth man's greed but four-fifths woman's cruelty to woman that makes it so hard a struggle for the girl who is obliged to work or starve or—worse.

"Votes for women" will never right this heartless wrong, but a matter so trivial is quite unworthy of the serious attention of those women who are chasing life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness via the ballot box.

If women had the right to vote, woman's lot would be even harder than it is.

Knowing that, the plain, every-day working girl is fighting shy of suffragists and their alluring but delusive bait.

That is why a recent attempt to secure the capture of a number of striking shirt-waist girls resulted in what may be called a "sickening thud."

One girl, on that occasion, voiced the sentiments of hundreds when she said she didn't care what the ballot would do for her in future years, but she would like to know what it would do for her now.

And when she finished speaking, another girl said to those sitting near:

"I don't see how women can attend to politics without neglecting their homes and families, and if they do that there will be more divorces than ever. And, any way, my young man says he never would marry a girl who voted, and I've heard lots of fellows say the same thing. If voting doesn't increase a girl's pay when she needs it, and if it is going to make old maids of us girls—no, thank you; no votes in mine!"

Yet, despite facts and plain speaking, suffragists say:

"The women who are opposed to us are those who are so well off in every respect that they have had no experience of the actual needs of every-day life"!

Sounds funny, doesn't it?

But how that clap-trap oratory must get on the nerves of the women who work at high pressure and low pay for food, shelter and existence!

Here is another beautifully worded paragraph by the same speaker:

"It is those who have had to fight the battle of life in the open who appreciate human wants and learn to know human rights."

Quite true, and from other lips and under other conditions the sentiment would indeed be noble.

But let us reflect a little.

The women who are demanding the ballot are, generally speaking, women of wealth, fashion and social position. They have not the slightest conception of human wants or needs or rights. Nor do they really care anything about them. Their battles in life have been fought in pleasant places and in the midst of great luxury. Their ideas of life as it really is to those who bear its burdens are gained from the stage or from books. Their utter ignorance of real human needs and wants is fully exposed by their contention that the ballot in woman's hands would cure all ills, remove all evils.

If that were true, I would be willing to vote not once, but one hundred times at every election.

"Women want the ballot in order to make themselves man's equal in all things."

It simply can't be done.

There is nothing in human life finer than the best and highest type of womanhood. But, alas! it is so rare! Most of us are by no means so wise as we think we are, and because we secretly mourn our deficiencies, even while we loudly proclaim our qualifications for saintship, we are bitterly opposed to comparing the average woman with the average man.

The former loses much by the comparison. Our best types of manhood, God bless them, are infinitely superior to us in so many ways; and we, who hold the man nearest and dearest to us as the finest product of civilization, who value his care, unselfishness and devotion to our interests at their full worth, who realize what true manliness is, are not going to stand quietly by and hear him abused by women who are eager to shirk their own duties and responsibilities in a mad scramble to usurp man's.

I would so like to know what the average suffragist really thinks of her husband, and I would so like to know what he really thinks of his wife!

It invariably follows that when a badly-balanced woman is opposed, contradicted or made to behave herself, she finds solace in the thought that she is the victim of masculine tyranny.

It is my private opinion that any woman who permits a man to continue long in a state of tyranny deserves all she gets, and if she is so devoid of tact and common sense that she cannot convert the tyrant's yoke into a daisy chain she has so thoroughly double-crossed herself that there's no help for her.

"Women want the ballot so they can secure equal laws for both sexes."

Here is where they show their logical infirmity.

It is true the laws as now framed do discriminate unjustly, very often, but invariably in favor of women. Let a woman be taken into court on any charge—breach of promise, civil charges, or even murder. She may be, generally is,

guilty; but, as a rule, she gets off with slight punishment, or none at all, simply because she is a woman. Frequently, when her guilt is so plain that even chivalrous man cannot overlook it, Justice herself tightens the bandage over her eyes, becomes hysterical because of the culprit's sex and begs immunity for her.

It is mere man who needs a merciful and just interpretation of law's vagaries, not woman.

But—all that would be changed if women sat on the bench or in the jury box; for then, indeed, would justice, cold, pitiless and cruel, be measured out in full portion for the woman who had transgressed. Imagine the fate of a young and pretty prisoner if the judge was a crabbed old maid and the jury composed of discouraged spinsters and divorcees!

Under present conditions, our male 'tyrants' frequently give woman the benefit of the doubt, but a female jury and judge would convict and punish her first and try her afterwards.

The most unbiased observer cannot fail to see that the wrongs of women are the result of woman's inhumanity and injustice, rather than of man's.

Let us question woman's view of justice:

Is she just when she scorns and reviles the fallen, yet welcomes the tempter to her home and makes much of him?

Is she just when she sacrifices domesticity to publicity?

Is she just when, handsomely gowned, giving every evidence of prosperity and luxury, she glibly tells half-fed, scantily-

clad women what the ballot will do for them some day in the dim future?

Is she just when she causes class dissatisfaction and revolt by misrepresentation and false promises?

Is it just to preach one thing and practice another?

Among the women most prominent at suffragist meetings and conventions are many who, in spite of their publicly professed desire to aid others, are constantly practicing dishonesty as well as unkindness and injustice in their treatment of less fortunate women. They employ capable but obscure dressmakers and milliners, paying them contemptibly meagre sums for fine work simply because the workers are unknown. They avoid paying their bills until absolutely compelled to. They house their maids in unsanitary, uncomfortable rooms and give them insufficient food. They neglect their homes, husbands and children in order to pose in public as the working woman's friend. They are hard and cold and selfish and heartless, thinking only of their own pleasures and pursuits, neglecting duties nearest at hand, evading their responsibilities.

I know many such women, and it fills me with indignation to see them pose as representatives of our real home-makers and home-keepers.

Many of them, because of sheer idleness and aimlessness, have taken up the "votes for women" question as a momentary fad, but they do quite as much harm as if they were sincere, are quite as successful in scattering discord and discon-

tent broadcast, with no thought nor care of the harvest to be garnered later.

Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that women will eventually get the ballot.

What will be the result?

A most appalling degeneracy among themselves as a sex; a total abolishment of home life; increased divorces; constant friction or entire disruption of respect and courtesy from men; even heavier burdens on the self-supporting woman than she bears now; chaos, curses and crimes, great and small, in all the relations, in every phase of them, that bring the sexes in contact. Women will lose dignity and refinement the moment they go beyond their sphere. "Woman's sphere" is, I know, regarded as something quite too obsolete and old-style to be mentioned in this progressive age. But it cannot be denied that the place in life allotted her by conditions, by customs, environment—call it what you will—is as plainly marked off as a tennis court.

No matter how narrow the confines seem to be, her influence, sent out from that restricted circle or plane, is greater than it ever could be if she wandered in places she should not traverse.

Very few women can be impartially impersonal, and the personal note, not necessarily selfish, is sure to predominate in all matters calling for feminine choice or interest. Their vote would be influenced solely by personal like or dislike, irrespective of fitness of candidate or party fealty.

To cite a case:

Two Western members of the W. C. T. U., at a recent municipal election, voted

for a saloon keeper. One gave him her ballot because he had helped her husband in a business matter. The other voted for him because she did not like the opposing candidate's wife!

A man can and does sink personal preference in favor of party and principle. A woman couldn't, and wouldn't.

Should the ballot be given to the women of this country, the two great political factions would not be the Republican and Democratic parties, but the "Man's Party" and the "Woman's Party."

The average or unnormal woman would know very little about political conditions and candidates and care less. The normal woman would be so interested and influenced by her husband's preference that she would often lose sight of her own election-day rights.

Under existing conditions, if husbands and wives are not congenial enough, not chummy enough, to become jointly interested in public matters, having the ballot as an individual right is not going to develop a mutual interest in each other's actions.

The assertion that women will purify politics has been refuted by two occurrences of recent date. First, by the attitude of the suffragist in Brooklyn who offered a five-dollar gold piece to the schoolgirl who secured the most names for membership in a young people's suffrage club. Second, in the fact that one of the two suffragist factions had a paid lobbyist—and a man, at that—to look after suffragist interests in Albany.

Those of us who know the inner workings of all the best and most prominent



clubs composed of women, and have attended annual meetings, smile broadly when we recall the strenuous times attendant upon such gatherings. Bribery, face-slappings, destruction of hats, pleadings, promises, tears and threats—all because of a most undignified scramble for office and power.

Any man who truly believes women should vote would promptly change his mind if he ever once attended a woman's club election. Ward primaries are "little mothers' meetings" by comparison!

I doubt if there is a solitary woman's club of any standing that would dare permit a male reporter to be present when there was to be a nomination or election of officers.

And the poor, bewildered dove of peace would find no rest for its feet in a household where father, mother and several sons and daughters each favored a different candidate.

Picture the "joy and serenity" of the home where each individual member exercised his and her inalienable right to electioneer for his or her "man"!

Think of the ante-election debates, controversies and recriminations regarding the merits and demerits of each candidate!

In homes of education and refinement, political discussions would doubtless be limited to bitter words and angry tears; but in uncultured circles, where Patrick enforced his views with a chair, and Bridget gently but firmly endeavored to change them by a counter-charge of broomstick or coal shovel, election day would have so many side issues that the

original object would be lost in the shuffle.

Quite recently I asked a well-known suffragist how she would like to have her two daughters select other candidates than those she favored.

The amazement was too genuine and extreme to be amusing.

"Why, my dear," she answered, reprovingly, "the girls would always vote as I advised!"

So, if women should vote, the problem of tyranny will merely be one of sex!

There are three excellent reasons why women should not have the ballot.

First. They do not need it.

Second. They would not use the power properly if they had it.

Third. Giving it to them means the destruction of home life, home influences and conjugal companionship; an increase of divorces and a decrease of marriages; race suicide, and a terrible neglect of maternal duties and responsibilities, and a total and entire elimination of man's chivalry and consideration.

The love of home, the desire for it inherent in almost every man's nature, finds its inspiration in woman. Her womanliness is her greatest charm. Men do not fear her as a rival, but they do object to her lowering her standard as a woman in order to usurp masculine duties and privileges.

There is absolutely nothing to gain for the betterment of either sex by giving women the right to vote and hold office.

There is everything to lose should they be given that right.

Because men are far-seeing, more observant, more logical, they realize what a terribly mischievous weapon in the hands of woman the ballot would be. They know to what lengths temperamental deficiencies will carry her. They can see clearly the dangers of "equal rights" in irresponsible hands.

Man's knowledge of woman's limitations, his profound respect for her womanliness, his perfect willingness to grant and acknowledge equality of the sexes wherever it is a moral, physical and temperamental possibility—all these he will interpose as a barrier to shield her from her weakness, her follies and herself.

Despite all declaration to the contrary, woman's so-called "tyrant" is her earthly salvation.

And deep in her heart she knows it.

PEGGY PRYDE.









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 809 774 6